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Psychosocial Variables Related to Weight-Related Self-Stigma in Physical Activity among Young Adults across Weight Status

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Abstract: A healthy lifestyle with sufficient physical activity (PA) can contribute to weight management. Yet, many people do not maintain a healthy lifestyle. To explain PA, we propose a model that incorporates the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with weight-related self-stigma. We recruited 325 young adults to complete questionnaires regarding their physical activities, weight-related self-stigma, and TPB factors. We used structural equation modeling to examine the model fit and the path invariance across weight groups. The model showed excellent model fit, but path invariance was not supported. Weight-related self-stigma significantly explained the perceived behavioral control, behavioral intention, and engagement of PA. People without overweight and people with overweight have different considerations for PA. Weight-related self-stigma is important for PA as well. To promote a healthy lifestyle, healthcare providers should provide different suggestions or interventions that suit their patients' weight-related concerns.

Keywords: overweight; stigma; physical activity; the theory of planned behavior

1. Introduction

Obesity is a worldwide health concern. A global study of 188 countries revealed that over one-third of both men and women are overweight or obese [1]. In Hong Kong, specifically, the prevalence of overweight had increased from 38.8% in 2004 to 50% in 2015 among people aged 15–84 [2,3]. Research has shown that individuals with overweight or obesity are at an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and lower quality of life [4,5]. Therefore, healthcare providers are eager to raise people's awareness about the importance of engaging in weight management behaviors that address weight-related health concerns.

Physical activity (PA) is an important factor in healthy weight management [6,7]. For adults, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends at least 150 min of moderately intense aerobic PA per week [8]. Moreover, low levels of PA lead to weight gain [9]. The global prevalence of insufficient PA is around 30%, and the prevalence is higher in high-income countries [10]. Many adults in Hong